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Item 3 (c) (i) of the provisional agenda*

Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the special session of the General Assembly entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in the critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: the role of men and boys in achieving gender equality

Statement submitted by Zonta International, a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the Economic and Social Council; Associated Country Women of the World, Centre for Women, the Earth, the Divine, European Union of Women, Hadassah (Women's Zionist Organization of America), International Association of Democratic Lawyers, International Federation of University Women, Pax Romana, Salvation Army and Socialist International Women, non-governmental organizations in special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of 25 July 1996.

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* E/CN.6/2004/1.

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We, the undersigned international and national non-governmental organizations in consultative status with ECOSOC, members of the Vienna NGO Committee on the Status of Women, present to the 48th session of CSW the following statement for information and consideration.

Referring to the debate on Women's Issues in the 3rd Committee of the UN General Assembly, during which Angela King, Assistant Secretary General, stated that gender equality and violence against women present a continuing challenge to the international community,

taking into account the continuous changes in the socio-economic frameworks which have caused changes in the social tissue thus affecting personal and inter-personal relationships,

well aware of the effect of the "missing fathers" on the development of children, and leaving boys in particular without male role models, and

registering with deep concern the steady increase of maltreatment, abuse and exploitation of children of both sexes, we

urge governments and their agencies to initiate programmes which support the equal distribution of public means as well as the equal distribution of responsibility between women and men in forming the well-being of their societies, and

expect effective measures a) against the feminisation of poverty by developing counter strategies and b) to ensure the inclusion of more men in the educational process. Gender equality has to become a common concern for the benefit of societies because it is a crucial factor in developing a country's fundamental justice system.